

The Pine Tree

The Congregational Church of San Mateo

United Church of Christ

225 Tilton Avenue • San Mateo, California 94401

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Epiphany Series

How's Your Faith?

Deepening Spirituality
in Uncertain Times

UNCERTAINTY
AHEAD

Sunday Celebrations in Epiphany

Penny Nixon preaching

1/3 Epiphany Sunday • Communion

Sermon: The Spiritual Search Begins with the Family Story.

1/10 *Sermon: When Faith Fails*

1/17 MLK Sunday

Sermon: Life is Too Short to Drink Bad Wine

1/24 CONGREGATIONAL MEETING after the service

Sermon: Not in God's Name: coming to terms with religion and violence

1/31 *Sermon: Who Are We to Judge our Parents?*

Sneak Peek: Lent, The Great Partnership

Our Lenten theme is based on Rabbi Jonathan Sack's recent book, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion and the Search for Meaning*.

A Word from Penny

After an absolutely wonderful Advent here at CCSM—the particularly moving Christmas concert, the endearing no-rehearsal Christmas pageant, a meaningful and lively Las Posadas (114 people!)—it is time to awaken to the light in Epiphany. I've chosen as our theme, *How's Your Faith?* It is based very loosely on David Gregory's new spiritual memoir. Gregory is the former "meet the press" journalist who experienced spiritual transformation after being fired from that prestigious job.

In the sermons, we'll explore our own spiritual journeys, the role of doubt, the difference between faith and belief. We'll try and come to terms with religion and violence and venture into the complicated landscape of forgiveness. All the while we'll be examining our own internal question: *How's your faith? How do you identify? Are you a true believer, an agnostic, a none, a curious skeptic, an atheist... or does it depend on the day? And what do those terms really mean anyway?*

More importantly perhaps, I will be inviting us to deepen our sense of faith/trust during these uncertain times. Since November, the world has shifted yet again—Paris, Beirut, Colorado, San Bernadino—and in our society, fear is at nearly a record high. It is fear that fuels

—cont. on page 4—



Our pageant participants preparing to enter the Story...



www.ccsm-ucc.org

Check out our website... it has a new look!

Thanks so much to Jeanne Back, Jennifer Jacoby-Yeh and Veril Phillips for all the work put in on this project.

Children, Youth and Families

Children Youth and Family Ministry Request

Please join the Children, Youth and Family Ministry in pledging to support CCSM's vibrant programming for 2016! All pledges should go directly to Pearly Masters! Thank each of you for your generous support of our community.

Faith in the Family: Sunday Mornings during Epiphany

How is your Faith? Deepening Family Spirituality in Uncertain Times

	Adult Worship Theme	Godly Play Story (PreK-5th)	Mid High (6th-8th)
1/3	Spiritual Journeys Begin with the Family Story	Epiphany: Visitors Come to the Holy Family	Sharing Our Stories
1/10	Doubt: When Faith Fails	Parable of the Mustard Seed	Thomas and Faith
1/17	Love: Life is Too Short to Drink Bad Wine	Parable of the Great Pearl	Kingdom Ways
1/24	Surrender: Let Go and Let God	Parable of the Good Shepherd	Baptism and Temptation
1/31	Forgiveness: Who Are We to Judge Our Parents?	Parable of the Leaven	The Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:36-50)
2/7	Transformation	FAMILY WORSHIP with	2 nd /3 rd Graders

Brown Bag Lunch Discussion:

Are We Nurturing or Smothering our Kids?

Sunday, January 31, 11:45am -12:45pm Buckham Room

Child predators. Cyberbullies. Sexting. School shootings. Fear. Fear. Fear. We are being buried in news that our children aren't safe and that we must be right there to protect them. The result:

- Kids afraid and unable to make basic decisions when they leave home.
- Helicopter parents.
- Deserted neighborhoods where no one plays outside.
- Adults afraid or forbidden to be part of the lives of children.
- Fear of the police and child protective services.

There is a movement that is taking on the fear. Pushing back

against restricting parent rights and treating our youth like babies. Join Steve Davis and Bonnie Rambob in a facilitated discussion on this growing movement. How might CCSM like to participate?



Girl Scouts caroling for CCSM members



The Mighty Blanketeers

This small but impressive group produced 32 quilts for Adopt-a-Family in December! They make quilts for Home and Hope and the Veterans throughout the year too. If you would like to join the Blanketeers, they meet one Saturday afternoon a month in the Buckham Room.

Email Susan Henry for more information.
susanelaine555@gmail.com

Nurturing the Spiritual Child: a four part series

Sundays, January 24 & 31, February 21, March 6

6-7:30 PM, Buckham Room

Rev. Bonnie Rambob is offering a four part series for parents, grandparents and any adults who are actively accompanying a child(ren) during



the first two decades of life. The presentations are based on a growing body of scientific research which illuminates the spirituality of childhood and adolescence as an untapped resource in our understanding of how humans develop, navigate life's challenges, as well as find health and healing. Like all other aspects of human development, our spiritual natures thrive when nurtured along the process of growing up.

This program is designed to be spiritually inclusive and is applicable for practitioners of all faith traditions or no faith tradition. Please invite friends.

Sign up with Bonnie, brambob@ccsm-ucc.org. Let her know if you would like childcare.

Ministry of Service & Justice

MSJ

BECAUSE OF YOU...

- Homeless in San Francisco and San Mateo County will have warmer and drier feet this winter. **You collected over 275 pairs of socks!** And a friend of the church knitted 110 warm caps to give the homeless too.
- **Sixty families in transitional shelters** in the county celebrated the holidays with lovely dinners you bagged up for them.
- The CCSM Santa visited **11 families in transitional shelters** in the county. That's 47 individuals receiving 94 special gifts.

THANK YOU for your generous spirit and kindness!

TEACH OUR CHILDREN COMPASSION

In October, you watched children bring books as they came forward in worship at Time for Children. In November, you watched the children bring socks forward for the collection bins. In January, our less fortunate neighbors hope you will bring in coats, winter scarves, warm hats, gloves, and raingear for the children to "lay on the altar." Not only do our neighbors benefit, but our children learn generosity and compassion.

One of the middle-schoolers, who helped with the Samaritan House Dining Room struggled to imagine how our dinner guests survived the cold and rain when they live in the tunnel under El Camino.

The CCSM Girl Scout Troop (#61818) found out that during the Christmas break 29 preschoolers weren't going to get their usual three hot meals a day at Intercommunal Preschool, so the troop had a spontaneous food drive for the families.

Thank you for being part of our children's lessons in empathy.

ARE YOU AT LEAST FIVE YEARS OLD?

On **January 18**, the Peninsula Multifaith Coalition sponsors the Martin Luther King's Day of Service, which offers over 25 service projects in the community where you can sing, cook, garden, hammer or read with children. Most projects welcome volunteers ages 5 and older, and start with breakfast at 8:30am and end by 1:00pm. Best of all, volunteers get to work side-by-side with members of other faiths and cultures.

But the project sign-ups fill fast, so go on-line to register:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/penmlk2016>.

Andrew Lind on Global Migration

Sunday January 10, 11:45am

Andrew is currently the Regional Emergency and Post-Crisis Specialist in the Asia Pacific region for the International Organization for Migration (IOM). He started his career with IOM working in Mozambique on health and humanitarian emergency projects.

He has since been deployed on missions to the Philippines (Typhoon Haiyan), South Sudan (Civil War, Protection of Civilians), Liberia (Ebola) and Nepal (Earthquake). He is a global trainer for Camp Coordination & Camp Management (CCCM), focusing on providing protection and assistance to forced migrants in natural disasters and conflict. In his current role, Andrew supports country missions in Asia and the Pacific, from Iran to Micronesia, in developing projects, conducting capacity building training and programs, and deployments for emergency management and coordination support. (Andrew is Betsy and Phil's son.)



ROAD TRIP TO OUR SOUTHERN BORDER

April 14-16, eight of us will travel to the border with Mexico to wander between the fences with the Border Patrol, visit Rev. Jerri Handy at Las Memorias (shelter for HIV-positive deportees), and help build a house in Tijuana. You only have to miss one day of work or high school to join us (six spaces left).



Ministry of Service & Justice

For more details, email msj@ccsm-ucc.org or call Kibbie (650-580-1797).

SOUTH OF THE BORDER RIGHT HERE

Three classes and one intergenerational experience will help us better understand our neighbors from the south—the tragedies they escaped, the risks they took, and current challenges in US hospitality. These opportunities after church will build on Andrew Lind's talk on January 10 on Global Migration.

JANUARY 24 (immediately after Congregational Meeting): *Root Causes: The Pushes and Pulls That Contribute to Someone Leaving "Home"* with Rev. Deborah Lee, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Director, Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights

FEBRUARY 7: *US Response to "Outsiders": Immigration Policies and Practices*, with immigration attorney Lucy Lee

FEBRUARY 21: *Trafficking for Sex and Labor: Why the Sale and Abuse of Humans Is More Profitable than Drug Trafficking*

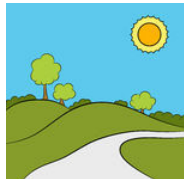
MARCH 6: *Cultural Stroll through the Mission District of San Francisco* (enjoy lunch, the murals with docent Lisa McCally, and more)



These are four of the seven Tool Men on the Wheels Team who worked on donated bicycles in the new space at the Masonic Temple. In one day they rolled out a dozen bikes for farmworkers on the coast (including four small bikes for children).

Wise and Wonderful Ones: New Schedule and New Opportunities

Beginning with the New Year, the Wise and Wonderful Ones will be meeting on the second and fourth Wednesdays beginning at 10:30 at church. On **Wednesday, January 13**, we will be exploring and sharing our spiritual journeys, which is our Epiphany church-wide theme. On **Wednesday, January 27** we will meet at the church and go on an adventure. If you are over 55 years of age, please save the dates. More details will follow. For more information about the Wise and Wonderful Ones, contact Janet Bower at jbower@ccsm-ucc.org or 650-483-2136.



Women's Relationship Support Group

If you, or someone you know, is divorcing or have recently divorced, you may be interested in our support group led by Pastoral Counselor and Acting Minister of Congregational Care Rev. Dr. Janet Bower. Within the context of a caring setting, women share their journeys and explore new strategies for developing resilience using spiritual and psychological insights.



Janet may be contacted at jbower@ccsm-ucc.org or 650-483-2136.

WANTED: Help with Pine Tree Mailing

If you are reading this edition of the Pine Tree on paper, you need to know how it gets into your hands. Each issue is copied, assembled, labeled, and mailed by a dedicated team of volunteers.

The Pine Tree

This team needs new helpers to ready the almost 300 copies each month. If you have the TIME (about two hours, usually the third Tuesday morning of each month) and the TALENT (inserting papers, applying address labels, counting), please contact Susan Campo at 650/544-0272 or scampo312@gmail.com. This is a great way to help in a very easy way, meet some new people, and contribute to our church community.

Time Out for Lunch

Looking for a few good women to join our lunch group, which meets in each other's homes four times over a five month period. We'll be starting again in late January and going through May. It's a good way to meet new friends and enjoy conversation and fellowship. If you're interested, contact Diane Kalliam, 415 469-7750 or email dkalliam@gmail.com



First Tuesday Book Group

January 5, 7:00pm, Buckham Room

Our next book will be *All the Light We Cannot See*, by Anthony Doerr. Please read it and bring your opinion of the book to our group. All are welcome to join us this time or any time. Upcoming books: February—*Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson. March: *My Stroke of Insight* by Jill Bolte-Taylor. April: *At the Water's Edge* by Sara Gruen. Contact Susan Stoehr to be added to the email list (s_stoehr@hotmail.com) or Betsy Woodward for questions (betsdce@comcast.net).



A Word from Penny *cont. from p. 1*

xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia, and this fear is present in many personal conversations and in our public discourse as well. How do we stay on course during these times? How do we face the uncertainty of our current world? I hope we have discussions and share insights about all these things, and along the way, maybe experience an epiphany or two.

Spiritual Memoirs Resource List

Madeline L'Engle, *Two Part Invention*
Frederick Buechner, *Telling Stories*
N. Scott Momaday, *The Names: a Memoir*
Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea*
Saint Augustine, *Confessions*
Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
Joyce Gladwell, *Brown Face, Big Master*
Immaculate Ilibagiza, *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*
William Kamkwamba, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*
Anne Lamott, *Operating Instructions*
C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*
Cathy Luchetti, *Women of the West*
Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*
Thomas Merton, *Seven Story Mountain*
Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*
Henry Nouwen, *¡Gracias! A Latin American Journal*
Eugene Peterson, *Tell it Slant*
Karen Armstrong, *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness*
John Shelby Spong, *Here I Stand*

CCSM's Epiphany Party

Friday January 8

7:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Kloss Hall • All Adults Invited

Suggested Donation \$25

Heavy Appetizers
DJ

Ornament Exchange

Bring a wrapped ornament
to exchange (no more than \$5)

Tickets may be purchased on Sundays
at the Welcome Table, during the week
days in the church office, or online at
ccsm-ucc.org.

For more information, contact Janet
Bower, jbower@ccsm-ucc.org
or 650-483-2136.

Flowers for Worship Service

Bring your creative talents to the table—the altar table. You can help create the seasonal flower arrangements that contribute to a spiritual atmosphere for Sunday worship and celebrate the beauty of creation. **Join me anytime Friday or Saturday in the sanctuary to prepare a Sunday arrangement.** Anyone is welcome. We'll talk about basic techniques, and you can contribute your own ideas.

Please call Pam Ridlehuber (650-579-7835) (email pridlehuber@gmail.com) or call Steve Davis (650-278-7416) (email ceo@secureplay.com) for more info.

Music and Art

Friday, January 15 at noon • Buckham Room

The theme is "Treasures from Home." Members will share with the group an art object from home, i.e., painting, statue or photograph and briefly tell its importance, special meaning or history to the presenter. Bring your own sandwich/salad. Beverages and dessert are provided.

New members and guests are welcome. Make your reservation with Zelta Adams, 650-341-1644.

Ethical Will Workshop

Wednesday, February 3 • 7:00 p.m.

In *The Road to Character*, David Brooks distinguishes between "resumé virtues" and "eulogy virtues." Reflecting on the distinction, we will explore ways to share our wisdom and love with others through an *Ethical Will*. While the formats may be different depending on our writing styles and gifts, we will explore the kinds of narratives, wisdom, advice, and values we hope our lives communicate and that we wish to share with those we love.

If you have questions or would like more information, please email Joliene Wade Gatlin (joliene.wade@gmail.com).



Fun was had at the Parent Kid Hangout in December

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of Joy...

Brett Ruona and her fiancé, Brad Bailey, have announced their engagement and plans to marry in about six months. Best wishes to Brett and Brad as they prepare for marriage.

Several of our beloved parishioners are celebrating very special birthdays: **Betty Stout** (1/03), **June Schutte**, who will turn 95 (1/06) and **Vera Pitts** (1/23). Happy birthday and blessings to you from your CCSM family!

Prayers of Comfort...

Prayers for **all who are suffering from the violence in San Bernardino**, especially the families and friends of those who lost their lives and are injured. May God's wisdom be present with those addressing the tragedy and striving to prevent future incidents.

Longtime CCSM choir member **Carol Way** passed away on Nov. 27. A memorial service celebrating her life will be held at Hope Lutheran in San Mateo on January 16 at 1:30 p.m. A catered reception will follow the service.

Deborah, daughter of Tom and Rae Banks, passed away on Dec. 19, a year after her diagnosis of lung cancer. Her sister and children were able to be present with Deborah on her last day. Our prayers of comfort are given for Tom, Rae, who has advanced dementia, and their family during this time of mourning.

Don Bower, father of Todd Bower, passed away suddenly at Peninsula Hospital on Dec. 25, with Todd by his side. Please pray for Todd and his family during their grieving.

Shirley Kavanaugh, mother of Janet Bower, passed away on Dec. 21, two and a half years after suffering serious injuries from a fall. Prayers are appreciated for Janet's father, Gordon, and their family.

Ann Ryan, Karen Jolliffe's cousin in Ireland, passed away from leukemia and lymphoma. Prayers for comfort go out to the entire Ryan family as they grieve Ann's passing.

Prayers of Healing and Support...

Barbara, 91, mother of Don Ruthroff, fell and broke her left leg. Prayers for Barbara as she heals and for her family as they tend to her.

Sharon Caiazza, Lori Shepard's friend, was in a serious car accident and has been re-admitted to the hospital. Sharon is in need of a graft to cover a wound that will not heal. May God's

healing touch and a successful graft provide Sharon a complete recovery.

Dr. Jim Groundwater, husband of Lorna Groundwater, is improving after being hospitalized for infections. He returned to the VA in Menlo Park and would appreciate receiving cards.

Michael Peterhans, husband of Laura Peterhans, stepfather of Jean and Ralph Garcia and beloved grandfather of the Garcia children, is seriously ill. May God's comforting presence sustain the family in the days to come.

Vera Pitts requests prayer as she continues to adjust to her health challenges. May Vera be reassured by our love and support and God's loving presence during this time.

Tom Lohmuller, our associate organist, is suffering from carpal tunnel, after using his hands for 12 hours a day at work and at church. Prayers for a speedy and complete recovery.

Rocky Hammons-Chang, Carla's newest service dog, has had cancer surgery and is now resting at home. We pray chemotherapy provides Rocky an extended life and a return to service.

Please pray for **Anne McEntee, Linda Hodges, Kate Engelberg (friend of Holly Allen and Camille Grant), Paula (sister-in-law of Kirsten Smith), Janice Kennedy (cousin of Margaret and Gordon Smith), Randy (nephew of Stan Higgs), Bill Daniels, Emily Tomasi, and others** as they walk their unique journeys with cancer.

Continuing prayers for **Ruth Black, Marjorie Griffin, Penny Gahagen, Martha Grannis, Lorraine Gustafson, Martha Imai, George Kromhout, Rosalee Lower, Jim Lowrie, Phyllis Mead, Adrienne Mitchell, Genevieve and John Parsons, Fred Petri, Janet Smith Roberts (sister of Gordon Smith), June Schutte, Betty Stout, Eva Thomson, Virginia Weir and Travis Woodmansee**.

The pastoral staff wants to thank you for sharing your joys and concerns with us. There are many that we pray for each week; some we can share with the congregation and some we are asked to hold in confidence. Please know that all of your joys and concerns are important. You may contact the church office or email jbower@ccsm-ucc.org if you need support during the week.

CCSM 101 Inquirers class

Sunday, February 7, 11:45 am • Buckham Room

If you want to take the next step in your journey with CCSM, come enjoy lunch, conversation, and a presentation on who we are and what it might be like for you to be part of this spiritual community.

RSVP to Janet Bower at jbower@ccsm-ucc.org or the church office at 650 343-3694. Please let Janet know if childcare is a need.

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facebook.com/ccsm.ucc



The Pine Tree

A newsletter for the families & friends of the
 Congregational Church Of San Mateo, U.C.C.

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CCSM and our neighbors enjoying Las Posadas with Jorge

CALLING ALL SCIENTISTS!

Wed., Jan. 6, 7pm • Hummus Kitchen, 150 E. 4th Ave., SM

Penny is inviting you to join her for a lively discussion over dinner about the relationship between science and religion/faith, and share stories and insights with Penny and one another. Please RSVP to pnixon@ccsm-ucc.org.

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Writing your Journey

6-week spiritual journaling class with Jorge on Thursdays

Starting Thursday, January 7 • 7pm • Fireplace Room

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

First-person writing as a spiritual exercise is a long and venerable church tradition. In the year 382, Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, "Hold still, dear tongue. And you, my pen, write down the words of silence and tell to the eyes the matter of the heart." Starting on Jan. 7, I will offer a 6-week class where we'll be writing as well as reading Frederick Buechner's book *Telling Secrets*. We will be looking inward, as well as outward to the world and the guidance of Buechner, to better understand our responses to our experiences: "telling to the eyes the matter of the heart." Each week, participants will be invited to share responses to a weekly writing assignment.

Due to the need for building trust in the group, it will be a closed group after the first day. It's easier to build the kind of trust that allows people to feel safe to take risks, ask questions, and share ideas if the group doesn't have people coming in and out over the six weeks. Thanks for understanding. I look forward to sharing my own personal life experiences and hearing yours. Please contact me at jbautista@ccsm-ucc.org if you're interested in this group.

Peace,

Jorge P. Bautista